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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

JULIA WARD HOWE. By Laura E. Richards and Maud Howe Elliott, assisted by Florence Howe Hall. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson said of Julia Ward Howe's *Reminiscences*, published in 1899, that the work might have been "spread out into three or four interesting octavos; but in her hurried grasp it is squeezed into one volume, where groups of delightful interviews with heroes at home and abroad are crowded into some single sentence." Mrs. Howe's life-story, as told by her daughters, certainly does not err on the side of brevity or want of detail. Yet in the numerous extracts from letters or private journal which make up the bulk of the two volumes, there is something of the same effect of which Colonel Higginson complained—the effect of much material somewhat hurriedly squeezed into a little space. There is a superabundance of experience, a superabundance of ideas; the expression of thoughts has to be abbreviated; mere intimations have to suffice. One is continually under the impression that the writer would have said more if she had time, and one is certain, too, that the more would have been worth reading.

As a biography, this life of Mrs. Howe is a little dissatisfying, in two particulars. There is, first, the effect of hurry and compression just spoken of. Scattered through the letters and journals there are, to be sure, many notable sayings—sayings shrewd or witty. But on the whole the effect of hurry and incompleteness is rather prevalent. Then, too, there is, from the point of view of readability and continuity of interest, rather too much than too little detail in the two volumes of the Life. This is only to say that the work has somehow failed to develop that unity and that almost epic quality which distinguish the greatest biographies. Nevertheless one would hardly say that there is anything in the Life that one would wish away, and it may be said that the book splendidly achieves its main purpose: it portrays a great character with lively truth and with something like completeness. Admirers of Mrs. Howe would hardly have been satisfied with a record less full; that the record for all its fulness of detail seems seldom quite fully expressive is the fault

Rich and varied as are the experiences related in this story of merely of circumstances and of human limitations.

Mrs. Ward's life, interesting as are the notes of work and travel, and study, and fun, and social interchange, in which the narrative abounds, the biography of Mrs. Howe is not one of those which will be read chiefly, or in any large degree, for its connected accounts of events or movements, or for its anecdotes of people. In this history of a life too active to permit of studied and careful record, the effect of character is dominant; and this effect is one that has to be gathered as the final impression of a composite whole—a blending of saintliness and “friskiness”; the steady love of virtue and the recurrent fondness for jewels; the deep intellectual interests and the capacity for joyous nonsense. Entries like these jostle one another upon the same page of Mrs. Howe's journal:

“Kant's *Anthropologia* is rather trifling after his great works. I read it to find out what Anthropology is.”

* * * * *

“Good is a direction; virtue a habit.”

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“Wearied by endless running about to find help for my charade,—having disappointed me. Determine to undertake nothing more of the kind.”

It is impossible in a limited space to speak justly and adequately of all the elements of interest which enter into Mrs. Howe's life story. There is, however, a dominant impression, which may be set down. William James once made the suggestive remark that in all probability we all have powers of the existence of which we are commonly unaware, and which we seldom or never use. The thought that human personality is less limited than is ordinarily supposed, that it may draw upon secret sources of power, is fascinating and finds confirmation in experience. The life of Mrs. Howe seems an illustration of this thesis. Here is a woman, one continually feels, who has reached a higher state of consciousness than do most persons—her imagination, her sympathy, her faith, her intuition, reach out beyond the narrow bounds of personality, and hence there is more light and more power in her than one can quite account for or than is ever in words quite expressed. Of something of the sort she was herself no doubt conscious. Yet she was no mystic in the popular sense. “I do not desire ecstatic, disembodied sainthood,” she said, late in life,” because I do not wish to abdicate any one of the attributes of my humanity. I cherish even the infirmities that bind me to my kind. I would be human, and American, and a woman.”

Always in Mrs. Howe's biography, the human element matches the spiritual element. There is an unusually acute consciousness of both, and an alternation between the two. In January, 1889, Mrs. Howe wrote in her journal: “In my prayer this night I asked for weight and earnestness of purpose. I am too frivolous and frisky.” Again at a much later date we read: “I did not dare to write to anyone yesterday, my head was so full of nonsense. Reaction, brain-

fatigue takes this shape with me, and everything goes 'higgle-wiggledy, hi-cockalorum,' or words to that effect." Short of pure sainthood, perfect tranquillity is seldom anything but self-complacence, and it is not surprising to find that these alternations of mood from the exalted to the nonsensical, from the earnest to the "frivolous," were accompanied by some measure of divine discontent. Certainly, there is no complaint or expression of dissatisfaction with life in these memoirs, yet one would hardly call their dominant note restfulness. Perhaps it is just this unrest, this consciousness of the dualism of life at a high level of mental and spiritual development, which gives to Mrs. Howe's Life its fascination and its profound human appeal.

ORDEAL BY BATTLE. By Frederick Scott Oliver, London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1915.

It would be according far too large a measure of praise to an excellent piece of work to declare that Mr. Oliver's book about the great war is a perfectly coherent and well-rounded treatise, sufficient in its analysis of cause and effect, wholly satisfying in its inferences. The unity of Mr. Oliver's book, is in a sense, largely formal. As in other works upon this or similar themes, little enlightenment is to be gained from the orderly marshalling of topics: the whole refuses to be firmly knit together; the treatise resolves itself into a series of comments, and the *obiter dicta* sometimes become of more importance than what appears for the moment to be the main thesis.

Measured by an ideal standard, or by the desires of those who crave certainty in a world of doubt, Mr. Oliver's book is deficient—as the author would readily concede. It opens up no new and royal road to comprehension. The reader, in fact, will find himself traversing, in several different directions, paths more or less well trodden. The fact remains, however, that Mr. Oliver has written, on the whole, the most energetic, the most subtle and the most suggestive discussion from the English point of view of the war and the larger problems it raises that has yet been produced. In intellectual reach, in psychological penetration, in the combination of dispassionate logic with scathing criticism and stirring appeal, Mr. Oliver excels most of his contemporaries. He possesses the eloquence of a modern prophet—a prophet, let us say of imperialism or of militarism—with more of the usual excess and with none of the customary cocksureness. This is high praise, but it is deserved.

In consequence of the broad nature of his theme, Mr. Oliver does, indeed, tell us a good deal that we have heard before; though it may well be that we have never heard it so well expressed nor with precisely similar emphasis. That "peace is the greatest of